AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION - HOLOCAUST GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Introduced By: Representatives Ackerman, Blażejewski, Regunberg, Amore, and McNamara
Date Introduced: February 12, 2016
Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. The title of Chapter 16-93 of the General Laws entitled “Genocide Education in Secondary Schools” [see Title 16 Chapter 97 – The Rhode Island Board of Education Act] is hereby amended to read as follows:

CHAPTER 16-93

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS [See Title 16 Chapter 97 – The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]

CHAPTER 16-93

HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SECTION 2. Sections 16-93-1 and 16-93-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-93 entitled "Genocide Education in Secondary Schools [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" are hereby amended to read as follows:

16-93-1. Legislative findings. -- The general assembly hereby finds and declares that:

(1) On November 4, 1988 the United States government ratified the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ("Genocide Convention") which was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Upon ratification, the United States government recognized that throughout all periods of history, genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and was convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation was required.

(2) The United States government recognizes that genocide still continues, today, in the
twenty-first (21st) century. The United States Congress passed House Con. Resolution 467, "Declaring genocide in Darfur, Sudan" on July 22, 2004. On September 9, 2004, the United States Secretary of State Colin L. Powell told the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "genocide has occurred and may still be occurring in Darfur." Additionally, President George W. Bush affirmed the Secretary of State's finding on September 21, 2004, when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly by saying: "At this hour, the world is witnessing terrible suffering and horrible crimes in the Darfur region of Sudan, crimes my government has concluded are genocide."

(3) The United States Department of Education says determined that "education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States. It is States and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds that establish schools and college and develop curricula …"

(4) The State of Rhode Island also has previously demonstrated its concerns and interests regarding commitment to raising awareness on subject of the subjects of the Holocaust and genocide.

(i) In 2000, the Rhode Island general assembly passed house bill no. 7397 "genocide and human rights education," requiring the Rhode Island department of education to "develop curricular material on genocide and human rights issues and guidelines for the teaching of that material."

(ii) In 2007, the Rhode Island general assembly passed house bill No. 5142, requiring the state investment commission to divest its assets from targeted companies in Sudan.

(iii) In 2011, the state of Rhode Island enacted an act entitled "Genocide Education in Secondary Schools" (Chapters 45 and 70 of the Public Laws of 2011) which emphasized a need to adhere to making genocide curriculum materials available including, but not limited to, the Holocaust, Armenia, Cambodia, and Darfur.

(iv) The general assembly has passed a number of resolutions condemning the Holocaust declared it a genocide. (Resolution No. 198 passed by the house of representatives at its January session A.D. 2015 and approved April 8, 2015 entitled "House Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2015, as "Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day" to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923 and in Honor of Armenian-Americans"; and Resolution No. 834 passed by the senate at its January session A.D. 2015 and approved April 15, 2015 entitled "Senate Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2015, as "Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day" to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923 and in Honor of Armenian-Americans").
(vi) The governor, legislators, and community leaders attended and participated at the Holocaust memorial dedication in 2015, at which a need was recognized for additional education on the topics of the Holocaust and genocide in Rhode Island schools.

(5) The establishment of free public education in the United States is intended to prepare citizens for participation in American social, economic, and political activities.

(6) The State of Rhode Island has also previously demonstrated its concerns for civic education, of which genocide education should be a component. In 2005, the general assembly directed the board of regents for elementary and secondary education to develop and adopt a set of grade level standards in civic education by August 31, 2007.

(7) Given the importance of the issue of genocide to the political affairs of the United States, as well as the responsibility of the state to educate its citizens, it is a fundamental responsibility of the State of Rhode Island to ensure that the critical subject of genocide is included as part of the curriculum in all public schools.

(8) It is the judgment of the Rhode Island general assembly to encourage that every the board of department of elementary and secondary education in the state shall include instruction on the subject subjects of the Holocaust and genocide studies where in an appropriate place in the curriculum, for all middle and high school students.

(9) On and after July 1, 2017, all high schools in this state shall, within their curriculum, include instruction on the genocide known as the Holocaust. Each school district or local education agency shall determine the level and duration of instruction to be devoted to the Holocaust education, and incorporate the materials created and provided pursuant to §16-93-3.

### §16-93-3. Powers and duties.

- The state shall adhere to the following procedures:

  - The department of elementary and secondary education (“the department”) shall make available on its website curriculum materials and such other materials as may assist local and regional school committees in developing instructional programs pursuant to this section, develop and disseminate to every school district in the state, including public and private schools, a copy of the Holocaust/genocide curriculum for each grade in high school. This curriculum shall include educational objectives that would be met through programs and curricula appropriate for each grade. The department shall make available on its website, and through other means, the following:
    - (1) A copy of the Holocaust/genocide curriculum for each grade in high school;
    - (2) Examples of units of instruction on the Holocaust and genocide appropriate for each high school grade; and
    - (3) Examples of curriculum materials and other such materials as may assist local and
The regional school committees in developing instructional programs pursuant to this section. The curriculum materials **may** **shall** include information on relevant genocides, including the Holocaust, and the genocides involving Armenia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, and Darfur.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage and shall apply to all school years commencing on and after July 1, 2017.
EXPLANATION

BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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RELATING TO EDUCATION - HOLOCAUST GENOCIDE EDUCATION

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1 This act would require all high schools in this state to include in their curriculum
2 instruction on the genocide known as the Holocaust and other genocides.
3 This act would take effect upon passage would apply to all school years commencing on
4 and after July 1, 2017.

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